

Message Text

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ORIGIN PRS-01

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-15 SSO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 CCO-00 PA-02

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DRAFTED BY S/PRS:JHTRATTNER:MG

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S/S - FVORTIZ

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USDEL SECRETARY IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS STATE 015355 TOSEC 010091

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SOPN

SUBJECT: SUMMARY OF DEPT. PRESS BRIEFING, JAN. 21, 1976

FOR FUNSETH FROM S/PRS

NO. 7

IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS, SPOKESMAN GAVE FOLLOWING REPLIES:

1. SYRIAN EFFORTS TO MEDIATE LEBANESE CRISIS: WE HAVE NO SPECIFIC INFORMATION BEYOND NOTING ARRIVAL IN BEIRUT TODAY OF SYRIAN FOREIGN AND DEPUTY DEFENSE MINISTERS AND CHIEF OF STAFF.

2. NUMBERS OF PALESTINIANS WHO HAVE ENTERED LEBANON FROM SYRIA AND THEIR ACTIVITIES: WHILE IT NOT POSSIBLE TO BE PRECISE, REPORTS THAT ABOUT TWO THOUSAND HAVE ENTERED LEBANON APPEAR REASONABLY ACCURATE. OUR IMPRESSION IS THEY ARE DISPERSED IN VARIOUS LOCATIONS IN LEBANON ASSISTING LOCAL ELEMENTS WHICH HAVE BEEN ENGAGED IN FIGHTING.

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3. U.S. DIPLOMATIC OR OTHER ACTIONS TO STOP FIGHTING IN

LEBANON: WE HAVE MADE OUR POSITION ABUNDENTLY CLEAR TO ALL CONCERNED; WE OPPOSE FOREIGN INTERVENTION FROM WHATEVER SOURCE AND WE OPPOSE ANY PARTITION OF LEBANON.

3. POSSIBLE REDUCTIONS IN EMBASSY BEIRUT PERSONNEL:

WE HAVE THE MATTER UNDER CONSTANT REVIEW AND DO NOT RULE OUT FURTHER REDUCTIONS. CURRENTLY THERE ARE 70 AMERICAN EMPLOYEES AT EMBASSY, OFFICERS AND STAFF. NO DEPENDENTS PRESENT. THIS COMPARES WITH 175 EMPLOYEES PLUS DEPENDENTS AS OF LAST SPRING.

5. REPORTS OF GUNFIRE EXCHANGED BY U.S. AND SOVIET VESSELS OFF ANGOLA COAST: WE HAVE NO INFORMATION TO SUPPORT SUCH REPORTS. WE UNDERSTAND NEAREST U.S. NAVAL VESSEL TO ANGOLA IS IN PORT IN MOROCCO.

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